SHAKER COLLECTION

Item 350 n

Somehow these pages come out unnumbered in last 2nd

1823

January 1. 1823. — In the course of last year, there was considerable feeling to reprint the Testimony, and much inquiry relating to the alterations proper to be made. This seemed to open the way for investigating certain doctrines therein contained, particularly the subject of mans fall. 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 (or the origin of evil) also relating to the miraculous conception of the Child Jesus &c. The ideas got up in the young order, on these subjects, troubled Father exceedingly; whereupon a council of elders was called, and Father introduced those subjects, and declared those new ideas totally subversive of the testimony, that if they were true, the testimony must be false; therefore, if these ideas were not rejected, they might give the idea of reprinting the Testimony and say no more about it. But (said he) I cannot believe these things, I must believe the revelation of God given through my Mother, and she never taught any of these things; and I believe that she knew more than they all; for she had the revelation of God, and all worlds lay open to her view. So I shall reject it, and as many as have a mind may go with me, and those who are otherwise minded may go their own way, I shall not go with them. So Father got up and with drew. We talked over the matter and agreed to reject the new light, which was nothing but old sentiments taken from old authors and dressed

it to regulate the public mind, by offering every thing on the subject that would tend to inform or edify. — And we should think that a very moderate portion of discernment might enable any unbiassed mind to discover, that such a devoted, self denying life as is led by the devotee of this institution, has but very few charms for a debauched worldly minded, wealth accumulating mortal; for those who are truly greatest among us, are the least of all, and servants of all. The truth is, our Kingdom is not from hence, and we only consider the things of this life of secondary importance — and think it duly to "use the things of this world as not abusing them, for the fashion of this world passeth away." Given this is taken out of vol Journal K 3 2 4

To show the light in which our Church doctrine has been viewed in courts of justice, in these days of generous freedom, we shall close with a brief extract from a speech of the Honorable John Brethett of Kentucky.

"And is it a matter of objection against any man, that his motives are so pure and disinterested, that he desires to be released from earthly thralldom, that he may fix all his thoughts and affections on his God? after they have signed the covenant, they are relieved from earthly care.

Much has been urged against the Creed, much has been said against their covenant. But, sir, I repeat it, that individual who is prepared to sign the Church covenant stands in an enviable situation; — his situation is, indeed, an enviable one; who devoted to God, is prepared to say of his property; — Here it is, little or much, take it and leave me unmolested to commune with my God. — I dedicate, I dedicate myself to what? not to a fanatical tenet: Oh no! to a subject far beyond — to the worship of Almighty God,

on account of any of our services or property—Shall de-
voted to the use and benefit of the said community.
In witness &c. It a part of Rule is
missing I guess it
Directly following this Covenant
and which it seems is needed here to round
out this constitution it ——— (164)
A few Reflections on the foregoing Covenant.
To show that the temporal interest held by the
United Society, never was intended, nor can be
appropriated to the wealth or personal aggrandizement
of a few, or only a part of said society; we submit the
following summary of facts, to present to the read-
er with a kind of synopsis of the general plan.
And, first; we most pointedly assert that we have
adopted the present mode of life, from the most
conscientious motives and principles,—that our
temporal interest is held in conformity to the order
of the Primitive Church of Christ; that this
dedication does not end with the lives of those
who thus dedicate it; but descends in perpetuity
to a regular heirship, who can never apply it to
any other purpose than that stipulated in our
constitution or covenant.—That the said instru-
ment is equally binding upon all the members
in these respects. The Ministry and Elders can
exercise no control over said property, otherwise,
than to direct the disposal of it according to the
covenant, personally, they hold nothing more
than unofficial members.—The Trustees only
hold, and manage the temporalities in trust;
and are as responsible for their conduct as any
other member. But these temporal arrange-
ments, however economical, fall far short
of unfolding the inward principal by which it is
managed. The most important consideration
which leads us to be so explicit on these points,

SHAKER COLLECTION

Item 350 o

Dec. 17th 1843.

Page 1st Testimony of Stephen Whiting.

Introduction. Feeling that life and the continuance of the same is the gift of God, and being sensible of My own nothingness, and that I am insufficient to do any thing ~~of~~ as of Myself; My only reliance is on Him and Him alone, for wisdom and strength to discharge My duty to him, to My self and all Mankind, as a rational and immortal being. And believing him to be a righteous and just God, who requireth no more of his creatures than a right use of the ability that he giveth to perform his will and work; I do cheerfully yield My self a willing Instrument to do the same, when clearly made known to me. Having full faith in the gospel of free salvation through Christ and Mother, and believing it to be the power of God unto Salvation or Condemnation, that is, all who freely receive it, by entering in through the strait gate, and walk the narrow road of self denial and the cross, will prepare themselves a name and a place in his Kingdom of everlasting brightness, to go no More out; and those who refuse and disobey, will shut themselves out from his presence, in whom there is fulness of joy; and from a seat at his right hand, where are pleasures forever More; and feeling a tender and sincere regard for My own and the welfare of all souls, with the union and request of the Lord, and for the sake of the same and those who may come after me, I have taken this chance to fall into their hands, do I freely feel to testify of My faith and experience in the way and work of God, both in the present, and also before I received the testimony of Believers in Christ's second appearing.

I was born in Bernardston, Franklin County State of Mass. May 22nd 1815. The Names of My Parents were Lewis and Lydia Whiting. My Father made no publick profession of Religion; My Mother belonged to the Baptist Church. They had nine children, of whom I was youngest but one. They taught us to be obediant and good, Industrious and saving, even not to pass over a pin or waste a kernel of corn. As I grew up, I found I had an evil nature which led me into wrong; and I often felt grieved for the same, and by turns desiring that My young companions and school Mates ridiculed me for not joining them in their festive Mirth, and vain recreations. When I was fifteen years of age the Spirit of God strove earnestly with Me, convincing me of sin, Righteousness and a judgment to come

and at the same time how he sent his Beloved Son into the world,
to save and to lead souls out of the same. Through obedience to the
true cross of Christ, according to my measure of understanding then
I soon felt drawn as by sweet chords of love to
walk in his blessed pleasant ways: yea his words of promise were sweeter to
my taste than honey in the comb. But when I came to talk
with my Priest and people, lo! not a solitary one could I find
that saw and believed as I did. and I used to pray, O that I might
find some who believed, like the primitive Church, to protect and
help me on my way thereward I asked them some questions which
they could not or else did not chuse to answer, by reason of the
cross. After becoming acquainted with most of the various sects in the
New England States, attending protracted and camp meetings, and passing through
several revivals of Religion among Baptists, Presbyterians and Methodists;
(and believing the latter to be the most Spiritual) At length with some twenty
others, by the solicitations of the presiding Elder, subscribed my name
as a class member of the Methodist Episcopal Church in my native
town and sustained a fair name in the same until the fall of 1836;
When I left for the Southern climate, having received a letter of fellowship
from the P.E. Elder. But Mysterious and unseen are God's ways with man.
On my way I took a severe cold which settled on my lungs, and
seriously affected my health. I called on Dr. Gridley at Southampton
of whom I expected to receive a supply of Medicine. He said that
I should go no further at present: that his house and all that
he had was the Lord's, and that I was as welcome to whatever I needed
for my comfort as himself. I thanked him for his kindness,
for I wanted to know something more of this apostolic Spirit: for it truly
exceeded all that I had ever seen, heard or known. He stated to me the
faith of the people with whom he stood united, who were perfectionists:
he also testified that the Religion of the different sects was a
Religion of Antichrist, and must crumble to pieces before
the all powerful arm of Truth. This brought me into deep
tribulation and concern of soul. And as I retired one night, crying
to God that I might know the everlasting truth and life for myself,
I saw, in a dream or vision, Christ and Mother at the head of
a great feast prepared for many guests. They looked pleasant
and beautiful. They invited me to partake of which I did after
freely, although I felt myself very mean and unworthy: for I felt
myself a sinner, and I saw the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

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Here my burden was removed, and here my former questions were solved at full view. I see wherein our first Parents fell from their first state of happiness and primeval innocence through disobedience, and the justness of Gods penalty incurred upon them for the same, as well as his everlasting Righteousness in creating and placing them thus to prove their Obedience and fidelity. I saw and not till then, could I say, that I fully knew what was the world and what was in the world, What was Man and what was in Man and in Woman: although after the flesh I never knew Woman; And herein I exercise my self, to have a conscience void of offence toward God and all Mankind: for no one can rise in Judgment, or justly accuse me as instrumental in turning any soul aside from the pure path of virtue, innocence and purity. This conscious innocence I esteem far above the Virgin Gold. Yet, I confess, through that same subtle and serpentine nature some would pluck the fruit so pleasant to the natural Eyes, and so much to be desired to make one wise; saying, take and eat. But to the honest sincere loving soul, such fruit is both loathsome and nauseous, and the wisdom of the same contemptible, sensual, and Devilish. Here is where where the youthful and inexperienced are apt to be ensnared unless protected by Wisdom: Here is the chief seat Where the Man of sin sits in the temple of God, as God. Meet and expulse this subtle foe from his post; and every other will successively yield to the artillery of Truth. which repulsed and driven back: in every attempt, he retreats with his vanquished soldiery, from the citadel of Man, with shame and disgrace. But to return after having the night vision, When I arose I was happy in the love of God. It was the most pleasant Morning I had ever beheld: every thing on which I turned my Eyes, seemed to breath forth praises, to its great creator God. I felt as though I was born anew, not of the flesh nor of the will of Man, but of God and strong enough to overcome the world. I testified of a truth, Christs second coming, and that to save souls from the dark sinful works of the flesh: that he was light, and nothing of him required to be veiled in darkness; and that his battle ax would break in pieces all Nations, Old and Young Man and Woman the young Man and the Maid This rather offended the Dr. he could not see it. He verily made a God of his lust, and was more than willing to bow down to the same: for he would not give up his wife, who embraced the faith, and strenuously Maintained the same for a while, tho, as he expressed himself, he was willing to be cut into inch pieces for his faith. And herein was the difference between these perfectionists so called and

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as a people, and the true Believers. Like John the Baptist they bore witness of Christ; But as yet, the veil remained untaken from off their eyes: for they saw not the plain truth, that to follow Christ the Second Adam in the regeneration, Necessarily excludes the works of the first adam in the order of Natural Generation. And thus Many seemed eager to enter in and even at the threshold of Heavens gate; but when the true cross was presented, it was a stone of stumbling and Rock of offence, on which their bark foundered: and many souls as precious to God as My own, were again sunk in the deep seas of sin and Moral pollutions. As I was frequently with the Dr in visiting the sick he one day invited Me to ride over to Israel Lymans, to Hadley. Here we Met with a kind reception; and I was invited to stop over Sabbath and attend a Shaker Meeting; for they were expecting some Elder to preach. Here was My first introduction to the faith and testimony of the Believers. I soon felt their kindred Spirit and found they had embraced it, and they gave me the Millennial Church to examine. Here I found the sum and substance of what I had seen by the eye of faith, and long prayed that I might be baled with My Natural vision. (For such was my ardent desire that at times both my strength and reason well nigh departed from me) I was astonished that such a Church could have existed so long, and I have known nothing of it. I wept, in secret, with tears of joy that I had found the only true body and Church of Christ on earth; and Father, thought I, will the eagles gather together. I read the book through, considered it in all its bearings: and after seeing and hearing Elder Joshua Bennett declare the truth, I honestly confessed My sins, with a witness in My own breast, as doing it to God in his order: and never knew I had cause to regret it, from that day to this. As I returned after Goods &c, to My friends, I told them I was going to join the Shakers. They Mistaking My object for embarrassment or a pecuniary one, (as I suppose, for My hands were but feeble) proffered me some five hundred dollars, as an inducement to remain among them. The bait, for Satan alloted the glory of his kingdom with it, for a moment, seemed to dazzle My sight: for I could readily have lain down My Natural life, could I have seen any way of deliverance for My soul with the rest. For the love that I bore them was stronger than I had ever known to exist between Parents and Children or brethren and Sisters in nature. But short lived My conference, ere these words were given Me. As I live saith the Lord God, though Noah Daniel or Job were here, they should save none but their own souls.

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I felt clear of the blood of all souls, and ready to obey the word of truth, regardless of all other considerations, and soon took my leave, hoping that some of them would be so wise as to receive and obey the Truth in the love of it; if not in this, in the eternal world. (And two of the most promising of them, were, in a short time as it were, hurried into the same, and I have since understood, one has joined the Believers. Now like Noah, I was ready to enter into the ark to outride the billowy deluge, which is already rolling amain through the earth. I left Israel Laymen in the fall, (having made that my home through the summer,) with their youngest son Edward Laymen to join the Believers at Enfield & the next spring, ~~to which~~ their family and another by the name of Talley came down. I was now brought into a work which shall try all souls as by fire for as by fire shall each ones work be tried. Here is a family of various classes, some rich, some poor, some high, some low, some experienced more, some less all called to prove themselves their union and relation as children of a new creation, and gain their redemption, which no soul can obtain, short of passing through suffering and deep tribulation, walking carefully, humbly and deeply before our good day by day. The lead or parental instructors of the family of which I am privileged as a member, were such as received and obeyed the gospel in their days of youthful innocence; having borne the burden and heat of the day, through all those dark and soul trying scenes, wherein the Devil, with his subtilety sought to lay waste this fair portion of the works of God. But as true to their trust, they gained and faithfully maintained the same, for the benefit of the rising generation their children. And having been for seven years an eye witness of their exemplary walk and daily manner of life, their kind admonitions, as well as severity against wrong, their charity, long suffering and love for penitent stiffiant souls, I can say in sincerity and truth, they are every way worthy of the high calling they sustain as ambassadors of God through Christ and Mother, toward their little flock, whom they watch over as souls that must give an account. And I am sensible of the debt of gratitude and thankfulness I owe for the same; and am not ashamed to own that I love them and all my gospel relation, with an everlasting love. & Among the diversities of gifts I have seen the power of God displayed in a very wonderful manner. I have sometimes discerned through signs what has afterward taken place according to the same. But the greatest gifts I can claim, are faith and Obedience to God, through the anointing and appointing here on earth; for all stones which, order and foundation of God, standeth sure and unalterable. For I know in whom I have believed and that he is able, through the same, to keep what I have committed to his trust.

I might enumerate many blessings and promises to which the heirs of Christs Kingdom are called; but a few shall suffice. For it seems deeply interesting to me and I trust equally so to every other, in relation to this last great Manifestation and Kind condescension of God to his holy Zion which is to be on earth, for the likeness of

this glory to shine forth perfect and complete, and Brought the same for the Law and the testimony of the everlasting gospel for the consummation of all things, to go forth even to the ends of the earth, and to all the inhabitants of a lost world, with the invitation, to accept the offers of free salvation, and flock to the Mountain of the house of the Lord, established on the top of the Mountain; for the same, there to sing for joy in the height of Sion, and rejoice in the God of their salvation. How pleasing the closeing thence such a crisis would present, But ere its arrival we have to meet, and pass through the counterpart, or Christ suferings; as foretold in the latter day; Isaiah 52nd and 53rd Chapter. Behold My servent shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any Mans, and his form More than the sons of Men. He shall grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground, without form, beauty or comeliness, that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected, and we hid as it were our faces from him, we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions; bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. This may be said to be true in relation to every one of us, as in a lost state of Nature; and in turn so will it be with us, as become into Christ; in relation to all the rest of the lost Children of Men, Who are now groping their way through times dark vale below. So let us labour to be wise, and get wisdom, and with all our gettings get understanding, to make a right use of the same, is the sincere desire and prayer of the writer.

What I have written I have written in simplicity and sincerity, not with a view to please the eye or ear of any Mortal creature, but to present a plain statement of faith and facts, just as they have occurred to My Mind. And I herein submit the same for the candid and impartial to judge, whether it be in accordance with Truth, yea or nay. — Stephen Whiting

Dec. 14th 1843.

SHAKER COLLECTION

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